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Worth Church

Sussex

By the Rev.
Arthur Bridge
Rector of Worth

With Illustrations

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WORTH CHURCH.

Worth Church

Sussex . .

By

The Rev. Arthur Bridge

Rector of Worth

Author of "Poems," "Roundheads and Cavaliers," "The Bridal Bouquet" . . .

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Caxton House, Westminster, S.W. . .

MDCCCCXI

THY COURTS.

Since Saxon king owned Christ his Lord and Head,
A thousand years (to God but as a day)
Within these courts have sped. But where are they,
Those worshippers, and whither have they fled?
Where those bold master-builders vanishèd,
That once, like us, within these precincts trod,
To offer prayer and praises to their God?
Where now the army of the saintly dead?
Still in Thy Courts those happy spirits dwell
Of that fair city here invisible.
In worlds far off or near, below, above,
Alike the mansions of the Father's love—
There will our lost be found, and called to go,
A Guide be sent us too, the way to show.

ARTHUR BRIDGE, 1902.

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WORTH CHURCH, SUSSEX.

LEAVING Three Bridges station on the London, Brighton, and South Coast line of railway, a beautiful country foot-path leads across the fields to the old Parish Church of Worth, romantically situated upon a knoll embosomed in trees. At the entrance stands the ancient lych-gate, as time-worn and picturesque as any in the kingdom. Passing thence down an avenue of limes, we come upon the venerable edifice itself, which, though centuries have rolled away, still retains its pre-Norman form and features. Indeed, Worth Church is perhaps one of the most remarkable in England, both from its peculiarity of form and great antiquity, exhibiting the earliest example of the purely English cruciform churches, which afterwards became

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so general throughout the country, attaining their highest development and beauty in the stately Gothic cathedrals that adorn our land.

Its claim of "very ancient" is beyond dispute, either by reason of the pronounced style of its architecture, everywhere apparent to the practised eye of the student in ecclesiology, or the actual historical evidence of its existence at and before the coming of the Norman Conqueror to our shores, when it and the lands around found an owner in William de Warren, the choleric son-in-law to whom the king, soon after his settlement on the throne, made a grant in perpetuity. Earl de Warren possessed forty-three lordships or manors in Sussex alone. Long, however, before the Conquest the church had probably been in the possession of Saxon kings for many generations; for it is supposed that Worth Church passed, with the Manor of Worth, under the will of Alfred the Great to his third son, Ethelward, if the

ANCIENT LYCH-GATE.

Wyrth mentioned in Saxon is the Worth of modern English; or it may be that Ethelward received it by deed of gift, for we know Worth was a Royal manor in the reign of Edward the Confessor; and being royal, a church probably existed in Alfred's time. We also know that the Manor of Ditcheling was bequeathed by Alfred to his cousin or kinsman Osforth, with other places in Sussex, which the will mentions, "are all that I in weal district have." The Manor of Ditcheling then embraced part of the parishes of Chailey, Ardingly, Balcombe, and Worth. It is important to remember that the manor, not parish, was the boundary of a district in Doomsday Book time. Manors are often to be recognised in different parishes as mentioned in Doomsday Book, although the names of the parishes themselves may not be. And so by some it is thought that Worth, joining the Surrey border, was included in the hundred of Churchfelle, and appeared as "Orde" in the Doomsday Book,

the Norman scribes omitting the unfamiliar letter W; and thus the entry therein reads: "Siward holds of Richard, Orde. Oswol holds it of King Edward." There is no mention of the church, but neither is there in the Norman survey of a church at Selsey, of St. Dunstan's at Mayfield, nor of the nine churches at Lewes, which, from the charters of that time, we know were then in existence. The Richard here mentioned was Richard Fitz-Gilbert, who owned a hundred and seventy-six manors, and was styled Richard de Tonbridge, because he built the castle of Tonbridge, and is supposed to have been the first Earl of Clare.

To return to the De Warren family, whose arms are emblazoned in the north transept window, mention is frequently made of them in English history. There is a notice of the De Warrens in a record bearing date 26 Edward I., and again in the 6 Edward III. We read that John de Warren, the eighth and last Earl, died 21 Edward III., seised of the

Manor of Worth ; also, in the mem. of Warren and Surrey (1255), that "afterwards the Earl [John de Warren] came in the octave of St. Martin at Cycester, and said that in Worth, Cokefield, and Dychenyng he had parks, and asked if the king had any claim in the said parks, to which William de Gyselingham said that for the present he claimed nothing therein." In a volume of the Burrell collections mention is made of timber having been expended about the Church of Worth during the minority of one of the De Warrens, Earls of Surrey. Mention likewise is made of Worth Church in the taxation of Pope Nicholas (*c.* 1291).

About the middle of the fourteenth century the church and lands passed into the hands of the FitzAlan family, through the marriage of the daughter of the last of the De Warrens with the Earl of Arundel ; and so to the Nevills, Earls of Abergavenny, on the death of the fifth Earl of Arundel in 1415 ; then to the Lord Bergavenny, who died in 1476.

We now come to the church itself; and, as we have said, the evidence of its great architectural antiquity becomes at once apparent. Every one with an eye trained to observe will perceive that the building has separate and distinct courses of footings to all its walls, some of them well above the ground-base. This base, in two stages (the upper receding) deserves a passing remark ; for rough and rude though it be, it recalls to mind the graduated plinths of classical architecture. This plinth was usual in all buildings erected by the Italian architects who dwelt in Britain during the Roman occupation.

A string-course, now interrupted, was once carried horizontally round the whole building, rather more than half the height of the walls, with vertical pilasters of rough short and long work, resting on the projecting double course of stone—the whole forming, perhaps, an imitation of early churches, which were nearly all built of timber where stone was scarce and labour and transport costly. Hence,

perhaps, the origin of "wood-carpenter" and "stone-carpenter"—the stone-carpenter copying in stone the wood-carpenter's timber-built structures, just as the motor-car of to-day, with a like absence of originality, takes its model from the carriage. These pilasters, whatever their origin, were very useful for banding the rubble together.

The companions of Augustine erected churches of stone, no doubt, in the Roman style. Bede contrasts the Christians of Scotland, who built entirely of wood (*robore secto*), with the practice of the English, who built of stone (*Hist. Eccles., Lib.* 3, c. 25). These narrow ribs of stone give somewhat the appearance of carpentry.

Before entering the building, the pleasing surroundings are worthy of notice. The natural beauty of the spot selected originally for the site of the sacred building could not well be improved upon, and the fine belt of trees serves as a natural setting to this gem of Anglo-Saxon church architec-

ture ; whilst the hardly altered level of the soil about and around the church points to the fact that at no time in the past centuries, since the foundations of the church were laid, has there been more than a sparse community in the immediate neighbourhood ; for, as a rule, in more densely populated parishes the surface round the church has grown swollen and turgid in appearance as the years roll by.

The reason that the only evidence left us of former mural decorations of diaper-work in colours (still to be seen on the jambs and walls of the south window close to the chancel arch) is so meagre is not far to seek. At various times, and in seasons of serious epidemics of sickness, of plague (from which, unhappily, the country was not in the old days exempt), of the Black Death, and other national afflictions, "orders" were sent time and again "from the Council" to use copiously the white-wash brush, especially in all public buildings

where people met to ask humbly on their knees for some alleviation of their terrible sufferings. Thus the fine, though perhaps not artistic mural decorations according to our modern ideas, with which most rural churches were enriched in the early days of Christianity in England, were covered up with the sanitary slaked lime, or scraped away bodily if the lime-wash would not adhere.

The semicircular apse at the eastern end of the church, being of a very ancient date, has been adopted in four of the churches in Sussex of undoubted Anglo-Saxon time. The term "Saxon" is here used by us as applied to architecture before the Normans, and was, we must remember, an imitation of Romanesque architecture of a debased kind. Regarding the apse, there are churches of the fifth century at Erivan in the Caucasus, and of a nearly similar early period scattered through Ireland, with these same curious apses. It may be noted that in all Mohammedan

CHANCEL AND TRANSEPT ARCHES.

mosques there is towards the east, in the interior, an apse, or, if the building only admits of it, a slight dome-headed recess, to which the worshippers face at prayer-time. These mosques date from the seventh century. The name "Worth" attests that the church is of early Saxon times, and seems to imply a closed place, "a residence of a personage," which, enclosed in a ring-fence, often of very great extent, the few retainers, farm-servants, and others, crowded together in village form, or in dwellings extending along the approach or highway. Of these "Worths" there are several similarly named places in England, such as Handsworth near Birmingham and Wandsworth near London, Colworth, Atting Worth, Beach-Worth, Dan Worth, and others that can be readily recalled to mind.

In St. Augustine's time, when churches began to be dedicated to patron saints, Worth was probably placed under St. Nicholas, the patron of sea-fishermen; but

little heed, however, has been given to the distinction, and the church to this day has been known in all ecclesiastical records as the Parish Church of Worth, and the boundary usually surrounding such properties may not have existed in this case, though a neighbouring estate still records its boundary in its name of Dich or Dycheling or Dyke, like that of a locality near Brighton.

The apse, viewed from the outside, attracts the visitor's attention ; it has, on entering the church, a peculiarly restful effect, as seen through the stately pre-Norman arch, which at once arrests the eye by its fine proportions and solemn aspect. The arch is very beautiful. For those who desire details, it should be stated that it springs, at the height of $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet, from massive semi-circular jambs or piers, with remarkable pre-Norman capitals, each consisting of a flat cushion and a square abacus. On the eastern side of the arch two half-round

shafts descend to the pavement. The arch is 14 feet 1 inch in span, semicircular, and of a single order, measuring at its highest point from the floor 22 feet 6 inches. Its western face had a double square hood-moulding, the under member being in lower relief than the upper, but only a small portion of the upper, next the north capital, remains. The eastern face has a single square hood-moulding, equal in width to the double one on the other side. The piers and arches are about 3 feet thick, and each stone extends through the whole thickness. The half-round descending from the capital deviates considerably from the perpendicular.

The chancel, including archway, is 34 feet 9 inches by 21 feet. This great length of chancel in proportion to the nave is remarkable, and in contrast to Norman churches, where it is not usual. A most striking confirmation of the chancel arch of Worth being pre-Norman will be found on comparing it with the chancel arch of Earl

Odda's Chapel at Deerhurst, which was discovered in August 1885, forming part of an old farmhouse called Abbot's Court. A stone still preserved at Oxford bears a Latin inscription, of which the English translation runs thus: "Earl Odda ordered this royal hall to be constructed and dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity for the good of the soul of his brother Elfric, which from this place quitted his body. Bishop Ealdred dedicated it on April 12th, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Edward, King of the English." This chancel arch, with its massive jambs and square hood-moulding, bears, indeed, a remarkable similarity to the one at Worth.

The transepts are really chapels—the south transept being called "our Ladies Chappell," and went by that name in the year 1571.

In an old churchwarden's account-book I discovered lately a memo. to that effect, which runs as follows: "Memorandum

that in the yeare 1571 when John . . . was elder Churchwarden that dyverse seats as were in the Bodye of the Church were—— the Chancle doare as also in our Ladies Chappell on the south side of the Church weareof were erected in such place as for the moste parte no seats had been before. And this was done at the generall charge of the parishe for the moste parte."

The transepts then, or "chappells," though resembling each other, do not coincide exactly in proportion or position. They are 19 feet by 14 feet within the walls, excluding the space under the arches. Each arch, 8 feet 8 inches in span, springs from a square jamb, rising to 14 feet 7 inches above the floor, and is quite plain. From the square and plain capitals, the upper projecting beyond the lower, a plain, square moulding descended to the floor on the inner side, in a situation corresponding to the half-round on the eastern face of the chancel arch; but all these have been

TRANSEPT ARCHES.

removed, with the exception of small portions on the jambs of both transepts. The masonry is remarkable for its rudeness. The jambs and imposts of the arch of the south transept have been to a great extent cut away to accommodate the occupiers of some pews, which gives this arch a somewhat strange appearance. In our Lady's Chapel, or south transept, there is a semi-circular arch of good masonry in the east wall partly built up. Probably an old altar once stood there. The lower pointed arch inserted in it probably belongs to the thirteenth century, as does the pointed arch in the north transept. The small light in the head of this latter served to light the altar beneath. Worth Church is perhaps one of the very earliest buildings with examples of true arches, where every stone radiates from the centre, and is locked in with a proper keystone. Many, if not most, of the so-called Norman arches have no real keystone at all.

The windows are of really great age and most unique in design. They are well-known to all students of architecture here and on the Continent, and it was only quite recently that, in examining some of the older structure of Dover Castle, it was found that there are some windows there of great antiquity, and of a like character to those of Worth. The church has, then, *three* remarkable windows in the nave—two on the north and one on the south; a perpendicular window now occupying the place where the Saxon one had once evidently been. These Saxon windows are probably unique. We are unaware of any others like them to be met with in the nave of a church. They are double, divided by a baluster-shaft of turned stone, with neck- and base-mouldings. The indications of grooves in the jambs and baluster-shafts would perhaps point to their being filled with horn, or oiled linen, or mica, or glass, in frames easily removable. There is evidence of glass

windows in churches in England before the Conquest. These windows show the influence of Rome, and these two-light tower windows, like those in the belfry towers of Italy, point to the church's early construction, and are placed high up in the building, almost close to the eaves of the roof.

The importance of this arrangement and its significance are not so self-evident in the twentieth century as in the old turbulent times before the Conquest. Then almost every church was used as a fortress, and the people had often to fly for safety for themselves, their belongings, and their little ones to the protection afforded by the solid walls of the church. Hence, then, it is no wonder that the windows were set high in the walls. Others have supposed the reason was to allow space for mural decorations, of which remains are to be seen around the window on the south side, near the chancel arch. Another reason, equally good, for putting windows out of reach was, that

SAXON WINDOW.

the costly and rich stained glass they often contained in their leaden frames was only too frequently a temptation to thieves; and, besides this, all church glass might be claimed by the heir of other property in the parish, if he could prove ownership by descent from the original donor. Executors could "claim the right to dispose of the glass, provided it was not made a fixture by the use of nails in its setting." Speaking of glass, although the Romans had glass, it may interest the reader to note that Sussex was one of the earliest places known for the manufacture of glass, as recorded in Charnock's *Breviary of Philosophy*:

> As for glass-makers, they be scant in the land;
> Yet one there is, as I understand,
> And in Sussex is now his habitation;
> At Cheddingford he works his occupation.

In the south window, to light the altar formerly placed beneath the chancel arch, may be seen on the jambs and the walls remains of a diaper pattern in colours. The

many coatings of rough dash, or lime and sand, applied to the exterior of the church during some thousand years have succeeded in concealing the arrangement of the stone-work, which is seemingly of rough square stone, with quoins of the local sandstone ; but since the sixteenth century, as we know from "Orders in Council" issued in the time of plague, the Black Death, and other frightful epidemics, all churches were required to be rough dashed on the outside, and *completely covered* on the interior walls throughout with lime-wash, as a protection from contagion, when people met together in numbers for public prayer. In this way all surface-decoration was obliterated, so that early frescoes illustrating Bible history in bright colours, which added greatly to the splendour of the Roman ritual, were quite done away with. Properly applied, fresco would probably survive, but the colours in the time of the Van Eycks would hardly retain their

brilliancy. To a later period (1486) would belong the famous wood-carvings and panels, which, after all, were a revival of older times, when wood in the North of Europe entered so largely into the scheme of structure and decoration of ecclesiastical buildings; but there are projections still existing which prove their former presence.

Tapestry, also a revival, was introduced in the sixteenth century for festivals and other religious observances. In the accounts of the sacking and plundering of the stately houses which stood in the parks and enclosures around Worth Church at the time of the Civil Wars, valuable silver plate and tapestries from the Low Countries are enumerated. Of these great houses, that of the family of Gale of Crabbet, to whom there is a marble monument in the church, was the greatest sufferer. We have mention of a very fine piece of embroidery and decorated garment left by the will of the Rector of Shere, in Surrey (dated May 14th,

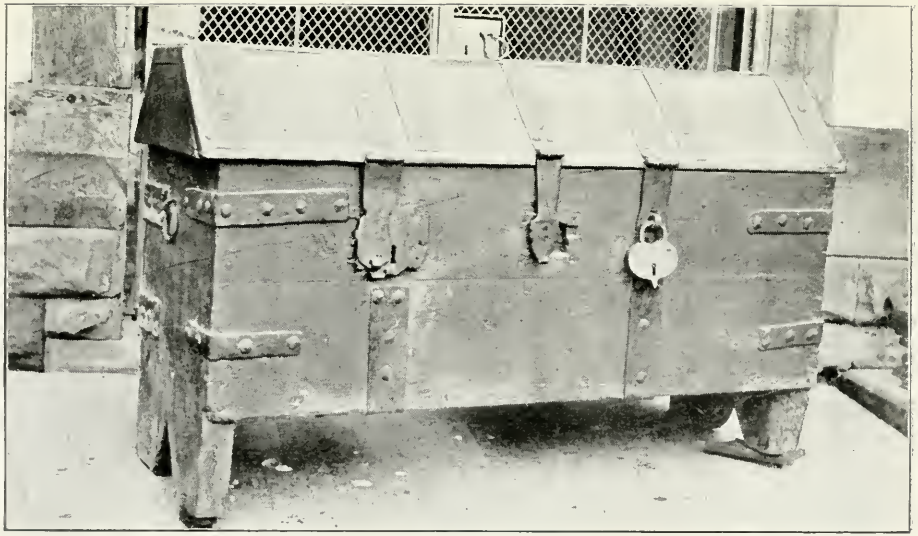
1412), to the Church of Worth. It was "a vestment of blue cloth of gold, worked with large birds in gold, containing a chasuble, lined with green cord: a white cope, with an orphrey of red velvet, embroidered with a star of gold."

The above-mentioned window with diaper pattern, and the one at the north end of the north transept, may be about the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The window over the west doorway is probably fourteenth century, the glass being modern. The glass in the south transept is modern and tawdry, and the vulgar and pretentious tiles in the chancel quite out of keeping with the edifice. Alas! too often in our English churches restoration means only the transformation of beauty to ugliness; and the epitaph said to have been written over a certain architect would equally well apply to many a so-called restorer:

> Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
> Laid many a heavy load on thee.

The sum of £3,831 was spent on the restoration of the church from 1869 to 1872. During this time the chancel-screen was taken down, and, unfortunately, not replaced. If any interested reader would like to supply the deficiency, and give as a memorial a handsome carved oak screen to fill the vacant place, he would obtain the gratitude of all lovers of old churches—of those who desire to keep them as much as possible in conformity with their original design. The stone bracket close to the chancel arch, near the south window, clearly indicates where the rood-beam once rested. The windows in the apse are modern, restorations perhaps of traces of earlier openings.

In the south transept is a very ancient church-chest or coffer, iron-bound and treble-locked, for the minister and two church-wardens. The Synod of Exeter in 1287 ordered that every parish should provide "a chest for the books and the vestments." No church-hutches probably date as late as



CHURCH COFFER.

the Jacobean or any after-period. Plain deal boxes were held good enough then for the purpose of a church-coffer.

Some of the old carved pew-heads will be found forming a panelling on the west of the south transept wall.

Between the north and south ancient doorways stands a very old and curious font, of the same material of which the church is built. It really consists of two fonts, placed the one on the top of the other (like that of S. Mary, Wareham, Dorset, which seems to be composed of two fonts). The upper font is a single square stone, rudely carved at the sides. On the west side there are eight quatrefoils, almost worn smooth with the surface. Perhaps at one time the font stood against a wall. On the south side are figured in high relief six pointed quatrefoils, three and three, probably mason-marks, which may some day give a clue to its date and place of origin. On its east face there is a double arcade of pointed arches, the

OLD FONT.

lower plain, the upper trifoliated; and on the north side or face a double cross-moulin.

In order to make the edges of the upper and lower stones correspond somewhat, the over-excess on the east edge of the upper font has been chamfered off, which may be an additional proof that this upper font was not originally designed for the position it now so strangely occupies. The lower or font proper is of great age, being 1 foot 6 inches high, and square, resting on a short cylinder between four columns, upon a square base. This severely classic form in the font now doing duty for a support to the more ornate one above would indicate its antiquity as coeval with the church, whilst no higher claim than to the end of the twelfth century can with any certainty be fixed for the upper Gothic decorated stone, which would also serve to indicate its age, and the certainty almost of its having been brought to its present position, not necessarily from some other church of the time of Henry III., as

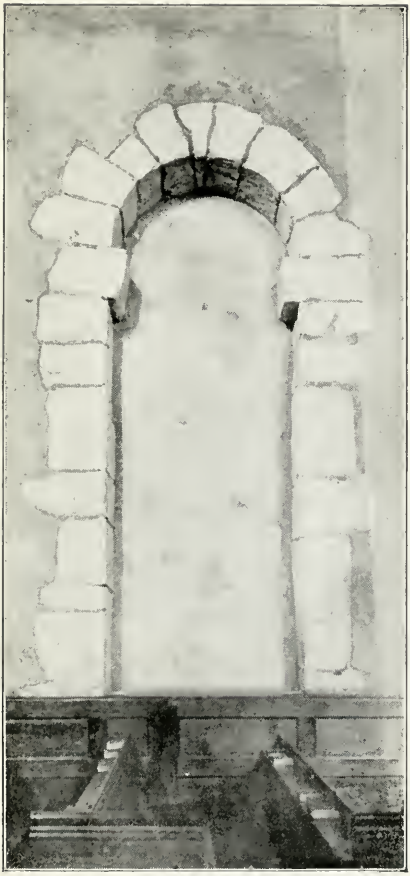
some suppose, but from that part of the church itself near the altar where such piscinæ stood as a rule in pre-Reformation times, either unsupported or inserted in the main wall of the apse itself or close to it. Hence it was removed at some very late period of removal or alteration, perhaps at the Reformation; and there being no other place handy for its reception, it found a resting-place upon the older one, making the lower baptismal font of a more convenient height for the officiating clergy; or it may have been, as some suppose, the original Saxon bowl ornamented about 1250. The visitor will not fail to observe the position of the font, standing as it does between the two doors. To the east side of the south door is a stoup for holy water.

Like most ancient churches, Worth has a north or "Devil's Door." This ancient door is now blocked up, but inside the church the reveals and arch of the original door are still to be seen intact, although from the

outside no traces are apparent. Why the north door was so named is, according to the ancient legend, accounted for by the supposition that, when the babe was baptised and received into the congregation of Christ's flock, the old Adam or evil spirit was exorcised in the Holy Name to depart from the child, the north door at the time being opened to allow its departure, and the door immediately slammed to again as soon as the invocation to depart was pronounced. The quickness with which the door was shut prevented, it was supposed, the return of the devil to influence the child's career.

In later times, as people became more free from superstition, but less hardy, the bitter, biting wind from the north caused this door to be walled up, as we see it now. But even yet traces of this superstition still cling to the north of the church, all suicides till recently being invariably buried on the north side.

In the chancel are a piscina and a Tudor arch. The piscina is recessed in the wall, covered



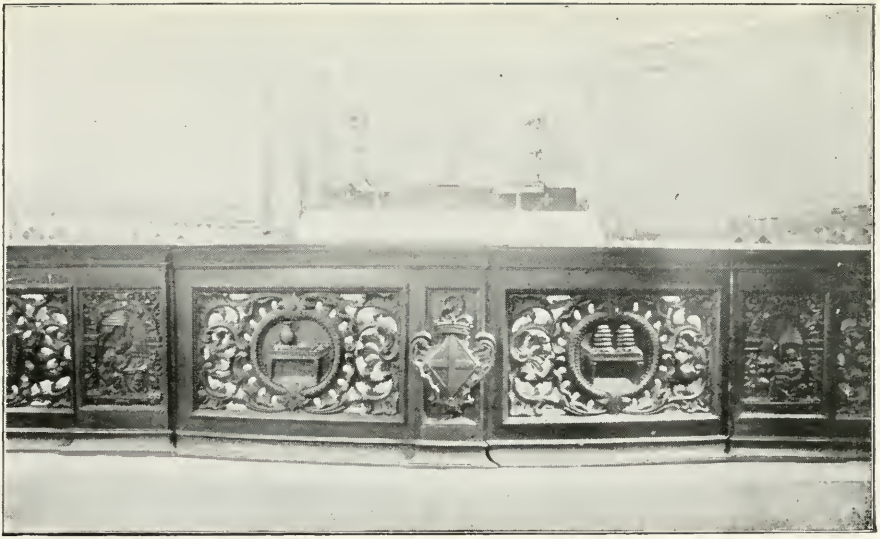
DEVIL'S DOOR.

with a shelf to serve as aumbry. The Tudor arch has a plain stone bench for sedilia.

The carved oak rails, representing subjects from the Old and New Testaments, may probably date from the same time as the pulpit, or a little later. These carvings are, we should think, of foreign origin, German or Dutch, and are admirably executed out of the solid oak. Perhaps they came from some abbey, as the coat of arms depicts in the centre an abbot's staff veiled, which thus distinguishes it from a bishop's. Could we trace to whom this coat of arms and the one on the pulpit belonged, no doubt it would help to elucidate their origin.

The belfry, containing six bells, is modern, rebuilt in 1869. Formerly there were four bells of "very great age"; but these four bells were recast by C. Oliver, of Bethnal Green, in 1844, and the metal, weighing 8 cwt. 1 qr. 19 lbs., was recast into the present peal of six bells.[1] It may

[1] An old manuscript discovered by me, dated 1684, gives



CARVED OAK RAILS.

be safely said that from the first establishment of Christianity in England, and long

us an interesting detail of the fourth bell of Worth; it runs as follows:

April the 21, 1684.
Received them of John Mills
Churchwardens Tho. Ellis

ye full sum of twenty four pounds, three shillings and threepence in full for casting their fourth bell of Worth and for adding two Hundred and one quarter and six pounds weight of metle to her.

£	s.	d.
24	03	03

Received by me,
CHRISTO HODSON.

The condition of this present obligation is such that if the above bounden Christopher Hodson, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns do well and truly secure, make good and cast the bell which belongs to the said parish of Worth according to his Bargaining that is to say that if the said bell should break or any way prove faulty or unserviceable by reason of default or any neglect in him in casting of the said Bell that she remains not firm and secure one whole year after the hanging of her up that the said Christopher Hodson is to make her good and new cast her which if he, his executors, administrators, assigns do well and truly perform then the obligation is to be void and of none effect or else stand and remain in full strength and virtue.

Sealed and delivered
in the presence of
JOHN BUTCHING
JOHN LANGRIDGE
The O mark of
WILLIAM PAYNE.

CHRISTO HODSON

CARVED OAK RAILS.

before the coming of Augustine, down to our own day, "bells have been the distinguishing feature of our country and peal-ringing our national peculiarity." The towers of Anglo-Saxon and Norman churches show peals of cast bells, some of very large size. Ingulph, speaking of bells in his time, says that at Crowland Abbey "Nec erat tunc tanta consonatia Campanarum in tota Anglia." This peal was destroyed by fire in 1091.

An earlier instance of direct evidence is given in the MS. of St. Æthelwold's Benedictional. In this MS. a tower is shown in which hang four evidently cast bells of sugar-loaf form. Other illuminated MSS. also show bells hanging in towers, and prove that they were in actual use for ringing—not striking—at a very early date. Egbert, in 750, commanded "every priest at the proper hour to sound the bells of his church, and then to go through the sacred offices of God."

St. Augustine came in 596, not to intro-

duce Christianity, but the rule of the Roman Pontiff, into these islands; and Odsceus, Bishop of Llandaff, in 550, removed the bells from his cathedral during the troubles of that year; and St. Patrick, who died A.D. 493, rang his bells in Ireland for many a long year before the foreigner came to impose a power so alien to the spirit of the nation.

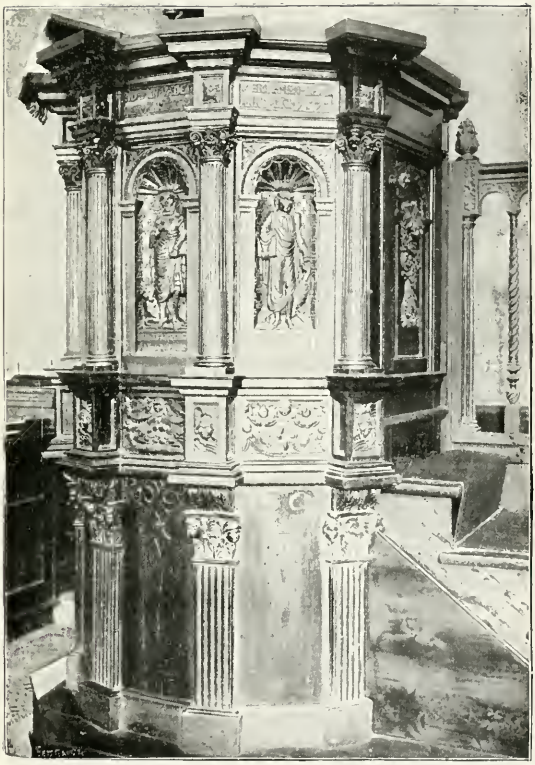
There is no evidence that the earliest or Celtic or British Church, which sent no less than seven bishops to meet St. Augustine at Aust Clift, overlooking the Severn, ever acknowledged submission to the Holy See or its supremacy in these islands. On the contrary, Abbot Adamnan, in his Life of Columba, says the answer given to the requirements of submission was short and decisive—"We will do none of these things," and "We will not have you for archbishop" ("At illi nil horum se facturas neque illum pro archiepiscope habituras esse respondebant"); for they naturally argued among themselves,

"If he would not now rise up to receive us courteously, how much more will he look down upon us, as not worthy of consideration, if we should acknowledge ourselves as subject to his authority."

The old oak gallery, which originally extended all along the north side of the nave, contains the inscription: "This Gallerie is the gift of Anthony Lynton, late Rector of this parish, who deceased the xv day of June Anno Domini 1640"; and in the Rectory study there is a glass window, with his name, 1592.

The two beautiful candelabra of twelve lights of the seventeenth century are worthy of attention.

The two stone brackets on the outside of the west door seem to indicate that it once had a porch. On the walls and floors there are inscriptions to the memory of individuals of the families of Bysshe, Shelley, Leonard Smith, Blunt, Bethune, and Gale of Crabbett; and a finely carved oak lectern,



OAK PULPIT.

designed by the Rev. A. Bridge, to the memory of the Rev. W. Banks, the former Rector.

THE PULPIT

is of beautifully carved oak, and has five panels, each with a carved figure and inscription beneath, carved in Low German character—the central panel being that of our Lord, with the inscription, "Ich bin allene di here unde godt" ("I am alone thy Lord and God"). The first panel represents St. Matthew with the inscription, "der evangelist Sante Mateus"; that of the second, "der evangelist Sante Marcus"; the fourth, "der evangelist Sante Lucas"; and the fifth, "der evangelist Sante Joannes."

The following couplets are carved above the panels in German letters, of which the upper lines must be read first in succession, then the lower ones:

I.	II.
wol mi levet	de werth min
who me loves	the same will my

III.
wordt holden
word hold

IV.
und min vader
and my father

V.
werth en leve
will him love
Anno Dñi 1557

VI.
vnd wi werdē
and we will

VII.
tho em kamē
to him come

VIII.
vnd een wannige
and a dwelling

IX.
bi em makē IŌA: 14.
with him make JOHN 14.

D. J. Bugenhagen was a Pomeranian pastor of the Church at Wittemberg. He assisted Luther in translating the Scriptures, and among the Low German Bibles in the British Museum there is one by him, under the title "Biblia; dat ys de gantze hillige Schrifft. Gedruckt dorch Hans Lufft tho Wittemberg. M.D.XL.I [1541]." In this Bible the chapters are not separated into verses; and the words on the Worth pulpit

are found in it, which, like that Bible, only refer to chapter S. John 14.

This pulpit was bought by the Rev. G. C. Bethune, Rector of Worth, from Street & Son, Antique Furniture Warehouse, Brewer Street, Golden Square, London, and erected in Worth Church September 29th, 1841. It is similar to the pulpits of the Protestant churches of North Germany; and over the whole of North Germany Low German was spoken.

It may interest the reader to know somewhat of the neighbourhood around Worth Church. Although the Thames is not without its poets, who have sung its praises in all ages on nearly every occasion, it does not seem to have had such serious votaries as its modest tributary the River Mole, which has its first origin in the vicinity of Worth Church. Spenser, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth and the author of the *Faërie Queen*, writes:

And Mole that like a mousling mole doth make
His way still underground till Thames he overtake.

Drayton thus writes :

Mole digs herself a path by working day and night
According to her name to show her native right,
And underneath the earth for three miles space doth
creep,
Till gotten out of sight quite from her mother's keep
Her foreintended course the wanton nymph doth run,
As longing to embrace old Thame and his son.

Milton also :

The sullen Mole that hides his diving flood.

In Thomson's *Seasons* :

The soft windings of the silent Mole.

The three bridges that cross the river Mole and give a name to the locality Three Bridges recall the fact that at various periods of the history of the nation the woods of Worth played a very prominent part, owing to the abundance of iron in the locality and the teeming woods for the supply of fuel. Camden, the historian, speaking of Sussex, says : " Full of iron-mines it is in sundry places, where for the making and founding

thereof there be furnaces on every side, and a huge deal of wood is yearly burnt, to which purpose divers brooks in many places are brought to run in one channel, and sundry meadows turned into pools and waters, that they might prove sufficient to drive hammer-mills, which, beating upon the iron, resound all over the places adjoining." And Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, published in 1612, in Song xvii., makes the woods of Worth complain of the injury done them by these iron-works, in what may be considered the finest passage of his poem. We quote a few of the lines:

When as the axe's stroke fetched many a grievous groan,
The anvil's weight and hammer's fearful sound
Even rent the hollow woods and shook the queachy ground,
So that the trembling nymphs, oppress'd through ghastly fear,
Ran madding to the Downs with loose dishevelled hair.

The working of iron in the locality is of great antiquity, and in the cinder-beds

the Roman coins of Nero, Vespasian, and Tetricus have been found. In the sixteenth century the quaint old belted cannon were founded here, and hence came the present iron railings around St. Paul's. As late as 1788 cannon were made at Worth.

The timber here grows particularly fine; the oak, elm, and ash arrive at great perfection; indeed, the oaks have been renowned from time immemorial; so much prized were they that the Navy contracts used to specify that Sussex oaks should be used. Worth Church stood then almost surrounded by the great forest which in Saxon time occupied nearly the whole of Sussex and part of Kent and Surrey, being one hundred and twenty miles long by thirty broad. This forest was called by the Britons "Coet Andred," from its exceeding greatness, and by the Saxons weald or woody country, or "Andredes Weald," probably from Anderida Sylva in the Roman itineraries. The whole

weald was rendered almost impermeable by reason of the great groves of oak and thickets, and for many a year was famous for its wild hogs and herds of deer.

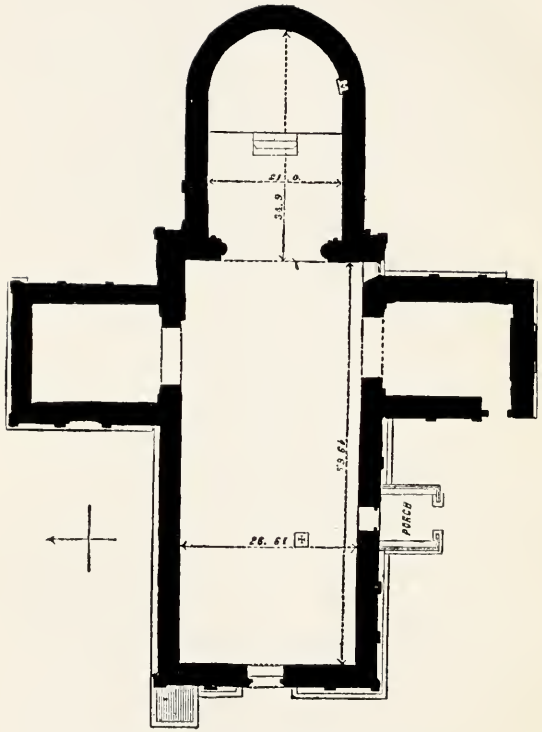
> All was one wild inhospitable waste,
> Uncouth and horrid, desert and untraced,
> Hid by rough thickets from the face of day,
> The solitary realms of beasts of prey.

So wrote Evelyn, the author of *Sylva*.

The Norman right of "free warren" first occasioned districts to be marked out and called "forests" or "chases." In Tilgate Forest, in Worth, part of the great Forest of St. Leonards, those marvellous creatures of the ancient world, the crocodile, iguanodon, plesiosaurus, megalosaurus, and hylæosaurus have been discovered. From a calculation of the bones, the iguanodon would appear to have been 70 feet long, 9 feet high, and 14½ feet round the body. Ages and ages ago these enormous reptiles lived in our country under forests of palms and tree-

ferns, enjoying a tropical climate like that of India now.

The great dragon or serpent of St. Leonard's Forest, though not so renowned as the dragon of Wharncliffe, has yet not been without admirers. The reader will find an account in the *Harleian Miscellany*, from an old pamphlet, printed at London by John Trundle, 1614.



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> And wished itself Eternity, to be
> Ever with her.'"

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